

Beyond the Alamo®

Neighborhood Discovery Tours
Guidebook copy:

Fort Sam Houston / Government Hill

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DRAFT

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Neighborhood Discoveries-Fort Sam Houston/Government Hill

This tour guide to one of San Antonio's unique neighborhoods is different than what you will find in hotel lobbies and visitor centers. More anthropological than commercial, it makes no claim to be the definitive guide to the "best of" anything. Instead, this is a tour made up of detours to the well-trodden tourist trail. We invite you to take this side road with US into some of San Antonio's overlooked, undervalued or simply unknown culturally rich neighborhoods.

Within these pages you will find an introduction to the history as well as a contemporary exploration of some of the reasons the area is important to the larger San Antonio story. But, it cannot contain all there is to know. Hopefully the stories and history visited here will inspire you to come back and make some true discoveries of your own.

Beyond the Alamo

Location, location, location. The old business axiom holds true for the earliest history of San Antonio. When a group of Spanish settlers needed a camp for their first expedition some 300 years ago, they picked a spot midway between the settled parts of Northern

Mexico and the French controlled towns of East Texas. That point is near where present South Loop 410 crosses the San Antonio River. Coahuiltecan, Payay, Lipan Apache and other native peoples already enjoyed this fertile river valley-a land they called “Yanaguana.” Nevertheless, the Spanish chose to call it San Antonio de Padua in honor of their arrival on this saint’s celebrated day. In late April of 1719, Governor Don Martin de Alarcon led some 72 Spaniards to the area to stay. Father Antonio de Buenaventura Olivares arrived soon after to establish the Mission San Antonio De Valero. We know this mission as the Alamo.

Today the Alamo is indeed “remembered” in history, myth, heart and controversy. Tourists come to San Antonio from throughout the world to see the legendary structure. But the story of San Antonio stretches far beyond those cool stone walls.

San Antonio Grows Up

Indeed, San Antonio’s physical structure and much of its sentiment as a “military town” were markedly shaped by the post-Civil War period. After becoming a Confederate state in 1861, Texas was readmitted to the Union in 1870. Between 1865 and 1875, the population more than doubled to 40,000. San Antonio remained the largest city in Texas on through the 1930 census.

These changes did not come without growing pains. The needs of a bustling city demanded an expansion in city services like sewers and proper cemeteries. Immigration from Europe was increasing and San Antonio’s central-Texas location in a still-fragmented nation attracted a federal military presence intent on further “civilizing” the frontier. This tour takes you on a meander along some of the roads and neighborhoods that shaped this development. Today, they provide a telling landscape of innovation and adaptation.

Within this Neighborhood Discovery Tour Guide you will find both a historical portrait and a contemporary exploration of some of the reasons this area is important to the larger San Antonio story. But, it cannot contain all there is to know. Hopefully the stories and history visited here will inspire you to come back and make some true discoveries of your own.

Old San Antonio City Cemeteries Historic District

One significant “living” record of geographical and social change during 19th Century San Antonio is the Old San Antonio City Cemeteries Historic District. Recently named to the National Register of Historic Places, the District encompasses over 100 acres on the city’s near east side. Noted cemetery historian Mariah Watson Pfeiffer led this effort to attain national designation and provided comprehensive research on the area.

Before City Council’s move to designate a new city cemetery in the mid 1800s, San Antonio burials were conducted at the old public and Catholic burial grounds located at

current day Milam Park and Santa Rosa Hospital near the Historic Market Square. These eight acres in the center of town were inadequate for the rapidly growing city center. But there were no City funds to spend on improving or buying land. Finally on October 2, 1850, City Alderman Onesimus Evans proposed that the City look at land it already owned near what was then known as Powder House Hill. This land was a part of San Antonio's original town tract granted to the municipality in the 18th century by the King of Spain and was named for the ruins of buildings apparently used as weapon and gunpowder storage by the Spanish. Former San Antonio Mayor Sidney Lanier wrote the following words about the landscape of the Cemetery District: "...the visitor may stroll off to the eastward, climb the hill, wander about among the graves of heroes in the large cemetery on the crest of the ridge, and please himself with the noble reaches of the country east and west and with the perfect view of the city." Today, a walk through the Old San Antonio City Cemeteries District still provides some of the city's finest vistas.

Proponents argued that other benefits of the Powder House land included its rocky soil, which was unsuitable for farming despite its good drainage and ventilation, fine views of countryside for visitors, and a sense that the higher land was symbolically closer to heaven. Finally in 1852, officials decided that one-half of the area would be sold at public auction, one-quarter reserved for free burials and one-quarter held for sale at a future time. During this time the Council also had the old Catholic cemetery leveled and cleaned up. There is no documentation of the time and place of disposal for the old city and Catholic cemetery burials.

Some of the new cemetery land was sold to private ethnic, religious and fraternal groups and the complex eventually included 31 individual cemeteries, 24 primarily Anglo American and seven primarily African American. During the 19th century, most Hispanics were interred at San Fernando Cemetery on San Antonio's West Side. This ethnic division mirrored that of the living: whites and blacks east and Hispanics west of downtown. The last public City Cemetery (#7) was created in November 1904 and was designated as a pauper's cemetery.

Family Cemeteries

The majority of early San Antonio families of note were buried in group cemeteries. Two exceptions are the Dignowity and Dullnig plots. Anthony Michael Dignowity, a Czech physician who came to San Antonio in 1846 purchased a large amount of property during land sales of the 1850s. George Dullnig was born in Austria in 1846 and came to the United States as a child. With little formal education, but keen business sense, he established a small shoe store that grew into the city's largest early department store. Members of the Dullnig Family are buried at the northern edge of City Cemetery #5. There is no official title to this land. The Dullnigs, like other families, purchased lots from the city, built a private walled enclosure and buried family members there.

Religious Cemeteries

Regina and Sigmund Feinberg, through a gift of \$100 from Regina's mother Elenora Lorch, purchased four acres of cemetery land in 1855. The following year the San Antonio Hebrew Benevolent Society was founded and the Feinbergs transferred a portion of the cemetery to the Hebrew Benevolent Society

While most Catholics in the 19th century were buried in San Fernando Cemetery on the Westside, German Catholic parishes had separate lots. These parishes included St Mary's (Lot #1), St. Michael's and St. Joseph's. During this time, San Antonio's first African American Catholic congregation, St. Peter Claver Church, was given land in City Cemetery #3. St. John's Lutheran Church received a plot east of the German Catholic cemetery in 1866. Emmanuel Lutheran Church also petitioned for plots in 1892. The two Lutheran churches later merged in 1922 and the cemeteries consolidated in 1926.

Fraternal Organizations

Fraternal organizations to have their own lots were the Alamo Masonic Lodge, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Anchor Masonic Lodge, the Order of the Sons of Hermann Lodge, Harmonia Lodge, and the Knights of Pythias. The African American Pythian lodge was apparently excluded from this gift and petitioned for its own burial ground in 1894.

The sale of cemetery plots to private organizations was especially important to African Americans in San Antonio who depended on such groups for insurance and death benefits. Often denied membership in the United States, African American groups got their charters from Canadian and British Organizations. Most African American fraternal organizations that petitioned for cemeteries received lots subdivided out of City Cemetery #3. These include the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, United Brothers of Friendship, St. Elmo's Lodge, and the Beacon Light Lodge. Previous to the establishment of African American private cemeteries there was a "Colored Peoples" burial ground set aside in 1876 west of the military cemetery. However in 1884 the military cemetery was expanded to encompass that land. It is not known how many "colored" burials took place between 1876 and 1884 and there is no record of how and where the remains were disposed.

National Cemetery

The expansion of San Antonio's military cemetery corresponded with the expansion of Congress's intent to bury all honorably discharged veterans in addition to those who died in battle. Soldiers who were originally interred in forts across West Texas and at other Army posts were re-interred at the San Antonio National Cemetery as the remote installations were abandoned. By 1907, the government realized it had to find a larger area. The Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, originally called the Post Cemetery was established adjacent to Fort Sam Houston in 1922.

Buffalo Soldiers

On Veteran's Day (November 11) families and soldiers gather at the Eastside National Cemetery to honor those who died fighting for the United States. Most of these ceremonies take place in the morning. In the afternoon, Earley Teal and the other Members of the San Antonio Buffalo Soldiers' Association gather at the National Cemetery to pay a special tribute to the Buffalo Soldiers and Seminole Indian Scouts who are buried there. Dressed in the traditional blue wool uniforms, hats, riding boots and yellow neck scarves, the group presents a history of the African American regiments that served on the frontier in the post-Civil War Army. According to Teal, Vice President of the group, some 300 Buffalo Soldiers are buried in marked graves at San Antonio's National Cemetery. Others are in The Tomb of the Unknowns and an additional 40 are buried at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

The name Buffalo Soldier was given to soldiers by the Plains Indians. There is disagreement as to whether it referred to their curly dark hair or to their fierce buffalo-like fighting style. All agree that it was a term of respect. According to the Handbook of Texas, more than 180,000 African Americans served in segregated regiments in the Union Army during the Civil War. When Congress reorganized the peacetime army in the summer of 1866, it recognized the military merits of these soldiers by authorizing two regiments of African American cavalry, the 9th United States Cavalry and the 10th United States Cavalry and six regiments of African American Infantry. In 1869, the infantry regiments were consolidated into two units, the 24th and the 25th United States Infantry. Known as skilled and tireless fighters the Buffalo Soldiers distinguished themselves in action against the Cheyenne, Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Sioux and Arapaho Indians. Thirteen enlisted men from the four regiments earned the Medal of Honor during the Indian Wars. Six officers and an additional five enlisted men also received the honor during the Spanish-American War.

Often grouped together, the Seminole Indian Scouts are a distinct group from the Buffalo Soldiers. They were mostly descendants of slaves who had escaped in the Southern States and taken up with Seminole Indians in Florida. During the Seminole Wars in 1817 and 1836, the Seminoles and Blacks who fought the US Military were never defeated. However, many were captured and relocated to reservations in Oklahoma. Some moved on into Texas and Mexico where they were trained and used as soldiers on the border. The scouts were led by General John Bullis whose home is a historic site in San Antonio.

Bullis House Inn

One of the stateliest structures in Government Hill is the Bullis House Inn located at 621 Pierce Street. Originally the home of General John Lapham Bullis, the mansion has lived many lives since its construction in the early 1900's. These include an insurance agency, a party house, and a day care center. Now a bed and breakfast, the structure is designated as a Texas Historical Marker and named on the National Historic Register. Built of San

Antonio quarried limestone, the white columned mansion is much the way it was in Bullis' day. Highlights include the original parquet floors, individually distinct 14-foot ceilings, chandeliers and nine fireplaces.

Born in New York, Bullis entered the military in 1862. He eventually went on to fight at Gettysburg and accepted a commission as captain of the 118th US Colored Infantry. After the Confederate surrender, Bullis was transferred to Brownsville, Texas where he became a Second Lieutenant in the new 41st Regiment (which became the 24th Infantry known as the Buffalo Soldiers in 1869). Over the next fifteen years, Bullis led the 24th in patrolling and scouting Indian forces. He took command of the Seminole Negro Scouts from 1873 to 1881, overseeing some 25 operations and several cross-border patrols. Bullis was appointed Brigadier General by President Roosevelt on April 13, 1905 and retired the following day.

According to military scholars, Bullis had a nomadic nature. His years of roaming the West made the design of his first permanent adult home all the more important. Construction began on the house in 1909 and was completed in 1911. Ironically, Bullis died of a stroke that year. He lay in state in the house per his request. The front doors had been designed wide enough to accommodate his casket. His family remained in the house until his daughter Octavia sold it in the 1950s to another famous general, Jonathan Wainwright. Wainwright used the structure as the home for a federal insurance group, which eventually became United Services Automobile Association (USAA), presently, one of San Antonio's largest employers.

One reported occupant of the house has yet to be confirmed. Yet, Bullis House Inn manager Mike Tease says ghost stories abound. Tease tells of a couple on the second floor coming down the front staircase before being stopped by something cold. Others report being awakened by an "Indian with a red bandana on his head," and hearing children running and laughing. These days the Bullis House Inn can house guests from this world in six different rooms and suites as well as a quaint 1920s bungalow on the property.

Government Hill

By the late 1860's San Antonio was becoming the hub of a cattle trail heading west to Kansas. The United States Government saw the need for centralizing their activities and decided that San Antonio was a good location for a military post. However, as with the city's hunt for a cemetery, there was no federal money to purchase land for such a base. Government officials searched for several years and considered locations in nearby Austin and New Braunfels. In 1870, realizing the financial potential of a permanent military presence, the City made a donation of approximately 40 acres of land known as Rattlesnake Hill. Around this time, the Galveston, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railroad located its depot on nearby land known as the levee. These two factors soon made the area a center for business and building activity. Despite the growth of the area, a visiting

general decided that the proposed site for the military base was unacceptable and declared it “too high and too far from water.” Finally, a lower spot near the acequia and the proposed railway station was selected. In 1875, the city made another donation of land, bringing the total amount donated to the government to about 93 acres. Somewhere along the way, the name of the area was changed from Rattlesnake Hill to a decidedly more respectable Government Hill.

In 1876, construction of the military Quadrangle began. By 1881, fifteen sets of permanent houses known as the Staff Post were constructed on the southwestern edge of the land. In 1882 and 1883, the Army purchased additional land in order to construct barracks and additional officer quarters. The living quarters expanded into the development of the residential area still known today as Government Hill. The most rapid growth of the neighborhood occurred between 1877 and 1890. It continued even as the railroad was acquired by Southern Pacific who built a new depot on East Commerce Street in 1904. The mix of Fort Sam Houston and the railroad supported many new businesses along North New Braunfels. By the 1920s many grand structures had been built including Terrell Castle and the Bullis House .

Terrell Castle

The name Terrell is spelled out across signs for San Antonio suburbs, shopping centers and streets. It also graces an imposing Victorian stone castle located at 905 E. Grayson. Prominent statesman and lawyer Edwin Terrell had the house built in 1894. A former Ambassador to Belgium, Terrell fell in love with the castles and chateaux of Belgium and France. He commissioned noted San Antonio architect Alfred Giles to design this residence patterned after those structures.

Originally called “Lambermont” after a business associate of Terrell’s, the home features a dormer, tower gables and Byzantine decorations. Massive blocks of stone are arranged in a visual dictionary of geometric concepts: arcs, rays, triangles and rectangles.

Originally, the first floor was a reception hall, library, parlor, music room, dining room, solarium, kitchen and butler’s pantry that led to a wine cellar; the second floor held six bedrooms; the third floor, four bedrooms and a ballroom; and the fourth floor, a single, huge master bedroom wrapped in windows that gave a panoramic view of the city. The house was a wedding gift for Terrell’s wife, the former Lois Lasater. The family, including six children, lived in the house until Terrell’s death in 1908. Terrell’s widow spent the rest of her life in Paris, and the house passed into the hands of many successive owners.

According to a column by Paula Allen in the *San Antonio Express-News*, one of the most colorful residents was Winifred Ree McDowell. She lived in the house from 1931 through 1939. The 31-year old, New York-born McDowell led the First Texas Church of Psychosophy. According to her account in [Alluring San Antonio](#), author/artist Lillie Mae Hagner visited Lambermont in 1937. Hagner writes that she had longed to see the inside

of the city's only castle for years. When "informed that a spiritualist held meetings there on Wednesday nights," she took the opportunity to attend. The meeting "was quite different from anything I had ever heard," says Hagner. "The spiritualist wore a long white gown and seemed unusually interested in her guests health." Hagner's take was that the "medium" was trying to round up new customers. In 1940, McDowell disappeared from the city directory. In her obituary in the San Antonio Light October 20, 1960, she is described as "minister of the Universal Church"

Lambermont was converted into apartments in the mid-1970s. After a \$200,000 renovation, it was sold in 1986 and opened as a bed and breakfast. Current owners Vic and Diane Smilgin took ownership in 1997. The 14,000 square foot structure still features a library, dining room and a curved staircase. The 18-inch thick limestone bricks house antiques and several fireplaces. Guests of the Terrell Castle Bed and Breakfast now look out the window to an acre of gardens, manicured grounds and a view of Fort Sam Houston grounds just across Grayson Street.

Other significant Government Hill Neighborhood buildings include:

Old Polish Culture and Arts Center -11606 North Alamo Street

This structure was first used as a meeting/learning center for the San Antonio's early Polish Community in the early 1900s. The site once had a natural underground spring flowing through the property. Tom and Lisa Leverett purchased the old estate from the Polish organization in early 1998. They restored the house to its original grandeur. It now houses Leverett's International Financial Group/Walnut Street Securities.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church – Grayson at Willow St.

St Paul's Episcopal Church, 1018 E. Grayson, was the first church in the area. It was established in 1885 to serve military families living in the neighborhood. A November 16, 1884 article in the *San Antonio Express-News* states:

"This beautiful stone church, on Government Hill, San Antonio, is now completed, with the exception of the pews and chancel furniture. It is a very fine specimen of a Gothic church, and is said to be, architecturally speaking, perfectly correct in form. Of this we cannot write knowingly; but it looks well and churchly."

According to the article, a Philadelphia woman gave Bishop Elliot funds to invest in San Antonio for the purpose of building a church. He used the donation to buy a Government Hill lot. Soon after this purchase, a new parish was formed in San Antonio. The parish received \$4,000 from the diocese. In turn the Bishop gave them the lot he had purchased. The "good lady" who gave the original money passed away but her daughter built a church in her memory. She gave the parish \$2,500 for a rectory and \$1,500 for permanent support of the Episcopalians in Western Texas and provided additional funds for the church

herself. As a result, the diocese changed the name of the “well and churchly” structure from St. Paul’s Church to St. Paul’s Memorial Church “in loving memory of the sainted Mrs. S.L. Coles.”

The Faculty House – 609 East Carson St.

This single-family residence was built in the 1890s near Fort Sam Houston on Government Hill. It was constructed to serve as the faculty home for the West Texas Military Academy, now known as Texas Military Institute (TMI).

St. Patrick’s Catholic Church – Pam Am Expressway (formerly Van Ness) and Willow. Catholic masses were celebrated on Government Hill beginning in 1890. Services were first held in a one-room house and then in St. Patrick’s Academy at Willow and Crosby (now destroyed). In 1895, a frame church was constructed at this site to serve the growing Catholic population in the area. The parish of St. Patrick’s was established in 1900. The brick building to the east of the church is St. Patrick’s Parish Hall. It was constructed in 1916. The present two-story brick church and adjacent rectory on Willow Street were constructed in 1922-23 following a fire, which destroyed the older buildings

“The Avenue”

The thoroughfare of North New Braunfels, once known as “The Avenue” was revitalized in 1996. The buildings are typical of many national commercial strip developments built in the early 20th century. Most are brick with some stucco facades. According to a November 6, 1996 *San Antonio Express-News* article, “‘The Avenue’ thrived in the 1940s with ‘Mom and Pop’ dime stores and a variety of services provided by what could have been a next-door neighbor.” Several of these shops were housed in the Nonken-Fritz buildings at 1923-27 N. New Braunfels. The buildings are estimated to have been built between 1912 and 1918. They form the heart of the revitalized “Fort Sam Houston Gateway Commercial District.” The revitalized area now houses several restaurants and the oldest Oriental Grocery in town. In the early days of the baby boom, Paul Snyder’s Tailor Shop was on the south corner of the building followed by the Battan Café and Tyroff’s Hardware Store. According to longtime Government Hill resident Maria Williams, “Mr. Garraty’s Variety Store was next to the hardware store. I can still see Mr. Garraty sitting in his rocking chair outside the store. After he died, a card company moved in. Further down were Charlie Frits’s Café, Tom Lergen’s Grill and Pool Hall, Stewart and Williams Barber Shop, Goldstein Military Store and Sommer’s Drug Store. Mr. Nonken had a shop south of his building where the Church of Christ now stands.” One building now houses a laundry/pizza operated by Rick Santos who grew up in the area. Santos fully restored the building including installing Mexican Saltillo tile on the floors.

According to Government Hill Alliance Neighborhood Association President Florence Alcosser, the neighborhood association has applied for historic designation with the city. Alcosser spearheaded the process in 1995 after some abandoned homes were bulldozed

and developers presented plans to build apartment complexes in the community. The proposed historic district includes an area bounded by East Grayson and East Carson streets on the north, Tilden Street on the east, Interstate 35 on the south and Hackberry street on the west. Several small areas incorporating portions of Muncey, Duval, Pine, Casa Blanca, Oak, Nika and Josephine streets as well.

Fort Sam Houston Quadrangle

Fort Sam Houston Museum Director John Manguso insists that the deer roaming the Quadrangle were not initially put there to be hunted by Geronimo. Instead, those deer are just one of the many myths surrounding the legendary Apache chief's stay at Fort Sam Houston – some say he once leapt from the Quadrangle's 60 foot tower. Geronimo did indeed spend six weeks camped between the tower and the north wall after his September 4, 1886 surrender to General Nelson Miles in Arizona. This surrender hinged on Geronimo being treated as a prisoner of war rather than a federal criminal. But Arizona authorities wanted to try him as a horse thief and murderer. So on September 10, 1886, the train carrying the chief and some thirty Apache people was stopped by federal authorities in San Antonio until they could decide their fate. Eventually, Geronimo was classified as a POW and moved with his people to various military forts in Florida.

While Geronimo's days provide some of the best Quadrangle stories, the 624 foot square area that encloses eight and one half acres was the original Quartermaster's supply depot. The Quartermaster is the officer responsible for the food, clothing, and equipment of troops.

The "Quad" was constructed of limestone from city rock quarries (site of the current day Sunken Gardens and Zoo). The structure was modified between 1877 and 1878 to house the new post's Headquarters. Architectural highlights include the Sally Port. This arched gateway through the south wall was the main entrance to the original Quartermaster Depot. In 1917, General John J. Pershing's office was located at the eastern end of the second story and in 1941, General Dwight D. Eisenhower's office was on the east side. There are Model 1841 Howitzer canons inside the 624-foot structure and blacksmith and wheelwright shops originally lined the north wall. In 1916, a telegraph office and supply office were added. Thirty-eight storerooms occupied the ground floor of the Quadrangle to house the myriad supplies and equipment for the Army in Texas. The original tank in the tower was filled with water that came from the Acequia Madre at the western edge of the post. Three elevated metal tanks were built behind the clock tower between 1900 and 1911 to provide water for the depot. The pond was added after the turn of the century. Finally, a sundial designed and built by Ernest Vidales was originally located in front of the clock tower. He was the first Latino shop foreman at Kelly Air Force Base. The inscription on the dial comes from the Roman poet Ovid and reads, "Time, the devourer of all things."

Fort Sam Houston is a unique National Historic Landmark as it is both a major present day military installation as well as a living museum to some of the oldest architecture on any army base. Staff Post Road alone features numerous examples of Victorian Italianate architecture and 16 structures designed by acclaimed San Antonio architect, Alfred Giles. In addition, the namesakes of fields, residences and buildings provide the visitor with a walk through military history. One of the best examples is the Pershing House named for General of the Armies, John J. “Black Jack” Pershing. In 1916 Pershing led the Punitive Expedition into Mexico and was appointed Commander of the Southern Department, headquartered in the Quadrangle. He resided in the Commanding General’s Quarters (#6 Staff Post Road) at the time.

Pershing Chinese and Asian Immigration

General Pershing is also responsible for a 1917 influx, what became known as “Pershing Chinese,” to San Antonio. Pershing began the Punitive Expedition into Chihuahua, Mexico in search of Pancho Villa after a March 9, 1916 raid at Columbus, New Mexico by Villista troops. Biding their time in Mexico because of newly restricted immigration policies, many Chinese living in Northern Mexico assisted Pershing and his troops. Interpreting their actions as treason, Villa vowed to hang every Chinese settler he could capture. Pershing did not forget their assistance. When he returned from Mexico, he brought some 527 Chinese who had assisted him and his men during the 11 months they spent pursuing Villa. Many of these new immigrants moved on to other parts of the U.S. and Cuba but 427 came to San Antonio.

In the late 1800s, there were a number of Chinese in San Antonio working on the railway. In fact, until the 1950s, San Antonio had the largest Chinese population in Texas. Many had filled in for an industrial workforce that had greatly depleted by the Civil War. However, Congress passed a law in 1882 banning Chinese immigration to the U.S. Unable to enter the U.S., the Chinese opted to live in Mexico and wait for a change in immigration law. On June 7, 1917, the *San Antonio Express-News* reported their arrival with General Pershing. Though still technically illegal immigrants, most of the men worked for the government as carpenters, blacksmiths, cooks and handymen. Four years later, President Warren G. Harding signed a law granting the Chinese refugees the right to remain in the U.S.

About half of the 427 immigrants settled here. In 1923, the Chinese Baptist Church, now located in the northwest section of San Antonio, opened downtown as the first Chinese church in the South. The San Antonio city directory for 1926 lists nine Chinese-owned laundries, 17 restaurants and 33 grocery stores. Unlike other Texas cities, no real Chinatown ever developed. Instead, scattered areas on both the West and East sides housed stores and restaurants run by Chinese who had learned Spanish during their time in Mexico. Many of the descendants of the Pershing migration have moved on to other parts of the country.

Medical Department Museum

Behind the front desk of Fort Sam Houston's Medical Department Museum is a large tile mosaic of the U.S. Army Medical Department Coat of Arms. The elements of the coat of arms expand the idea of army medicine and provide clues to the range of exhibits, oddities and history that the Museum contains. The symbol of the rooster near the top is connected to the Greek god of healing and is a reference to early medical diagnosis supposedly "seen" in the entrails of a sacrificial rooster. The fowl symbol also recalls a time when medical care was often paid for in poultry. The blue and silver wreath next to the rooster displays the 1818 original army colors. The green staff with a snake coiled around it is the staff of Aesculapius, the god of healing and the son of the Sun God, Apollo.

As with the coat of arms, the Medical Department Museum expands the idea of military medicine for both military personnel and the general public alike. This unique collection includes original artwork of military scenes. One painting shows George Washington presenting the first Purple Heart. Myth has it that Washington asked his wife Martha to sew a badge for a wounded officer. She had a scrap of purple fabric in her sewing basket and the honor was born. In reality, the badge was intended as a medal of valor, what we now know as the Medal of Honor. Another painting portrays Dr. William Beaumont's experiments in digestion as seen through a flap in Alexis St. Martin's stomach. In addition to paintings and sculpture, the collection features all kinds of battlefield memorabilia. Medic field cases from the Revolutionary War through Desert Storm provide a painful look at battle injury history. Displays of captured foreign medical equipment include German Dr. Esmarch's patented Triangular Bandage from WWII. It comes with diagrams of some twenty uses for the bandage. There is also a series of Abbot Laboratory commissioned drawings of the atrocities of military medicine by John Groth.

Some of the more surprising exhibits include a display of herbal remedies used by field doctors, a rather treacherous looking dental kit (including a primitive tonsil guillotine), leech containers, and original army X-ray machines. A 1919 *San Antonio Light* article with the headline "What the Army is doing with the X-Ray," reports that "The electro-active rays have their certain and malignant effect from which no one who has much to do with them can escape." According to Dr. W. A. Osterdorf, "After looking at 30 or 40 cases without interruption, I have been so nauseated I have had to stop and go outside before I can continue." One exhibit was donated to the Army by someone who thought it was a military scanning device. It is actually the machine of Dinshah Pedstanji-Framj Ghadiali from Bombay, India. He claimed to heal by shining specific wavelengths of light through individuals to correct imbalances.

Perhaps most poignant of all are the works of art salvaged and stolen. They include including drawings on army ration "hardtack" of salt flour and bread. Examples of therapeutic art include wallets folded from hundreds of disposable tobacco pouches and

other so-called “trench art” engraved canteens and recycled shell “vases.” From Civil War uniforms to Iron Lungs to an actual medical evacuation train car in the courtyard, the Medical Department Museum presents a collection to broaden ideas of both medicine and the military.

Toilet Seat Art Museum

As for collections truly like no other, one need look no farther than Barney Smith’s Alamo Heights garage. Inside the tin walls, a visitor can find a floor to ceiling arrangement of nearly 500 toilet seat lids depicting everything from 20th century pop culture to family vacations to the O.J. Simpson trial. A retired master plumber, the 80-year-old Smith began his ever-evolving shrine nearly 30 years ago. Now numbering close to 500 toilet seat sculptures, Smith says he began when “I noticed the seats were about the same shape as a horn-holder and I had some deer horns to mount.” Smith soon began mounting old faucets and parts to show trade school students he was then teaching at a local high school. Highlights of the mind-boggling collection include mounted Indian arrowheads, an actual leaf of marijuana (with a *Say No To Drugs!* sign), San Antonio Spurs memorabilia and the beautiful blond hair of one of his grandchildren. Smith takes suggestions and contributions to add to the collection from friends and strangers alike. One of the most controversial lids hosts a nativity scene that was part of a 1997 Christmas installation at the museum. Smith’s collection is open any time he is home. He will usually greet you from an intercom installed in his home. Visitors have come from as far as Ireland, Poland, Israel and South Korea. None of the toilet seats are for sale. As Smith says, “I can’t break up the collection. They are all too important.” Indeed, within the wall-to-wall artistry, knick-knacks and inspiration, the fact that this art is all on very familiar white porcelain almost fades away. Almost.

Mahncke Park

The open green spaces just a few miles north of downtown San Antonio owe their existence to Ludwig Mahncke and his friend, George Brackenridge. Together, the two men greatly shaped the creation of some of the city’s most important parks. Selections from Mahncke’s eulogy says much about his philosophy as Parks Commissioner of San Antonio:

“He (Ludwig Mahncke) loved the trees, the beautiful shining river and the timid dumb creatures of Brackenridge Park who were placed there by his hands, knew his voice, and responded to his call...the winding river faced by living walls of green. The quiet shaded walks by the waters where stately swans floated gracefully on the placid surface, the grand old pecan trees that lift their giant arms heavenward, the venerable oaks with their trailing mossy vestments were all dear to the heart of Mahncke.”

A German immigrant who came to San Antonio in 1882, Mahncke was, according to his granddaughter, the original “dollar a year man” taking a nominal fee for his work for the

city. Like his friend, George Brackenridge, he objected to slavery and secession. Mahncke convinced Brackenridge to donate the majority of his riverbank estate to the city as a park. The city once jokingly dubbed it “Prohibition Park” because of a restriction in the deed that forbade drinking. But this was more Brackenridge’s stand than Mahncke’s, who also ran a popular beer-drinking place downtown called The Mahncke. The building eventually became the legendary Gunter Hotel. Brackenridge also donated the land that became Mahncke Park. Mahncke also served as Alderman of San Antonio from 1897 to 1906. He died in 1906 of pneumonia.

Schuetzen Verein

Had Mahncke been by to visit the area that is now called Mahncke Park on a Sunday afternoon during the early 1900’s, he might not have been able to have one of the “quiet shaded walks” he was said to enjoy. Instead, he would have met German families enjoying picnics, beer and song. He would have also had to watch for shells buzzing by his ears. Indeed, Mahncke Park was the regular Sunday site of the Schuetzen Verein or Old German Shooting Company. One of the “Old World” sports brought to San Antonio by German settlers in the 1850’s; the competition involved taking ten shots at a target. A score of 230 out of 250 was considered good. This meant that all shots at 200 yards had to hit a four and a half inch circle.

Established as early as 1555 in Germany, early Schuetzen Verein included balloon ascensions, dancing and the presentation of medals. Traditionally families would leave early to begin preparations for a 1 p.m. shooting time. According to a December 3, 1950 *San Antonio Express-News* article, kegs of beer were always near the firing line to “steady the nerves.” Families would travel to the competitions from other clubs in Boerne, Cutoff, Green Valley, Helotes, New Braunfels and Vogel’s Valley.

The San Antonio Schuetzen Verein’s first clubhouse was located on Austin Street where the Eastside City Cemeteries were located. Often meetings were interrupted by funeral processions. Eventually, the group moved to a River Road location. Shots were fired from current day Broadway due east between Funston and Parland Streets. The San Antonio Schuetzen Verein boasted some of the best shots in the state, if not the country. In 1950 Herman Dreiss, who operated Dreiss Pharmacy on Alamo Plaza for 40 years, told the *San Antonio Express-News* about the 1899 King Shoot. The King Shoot took place every year on Pentecost Sunday and the title went to the shooter to make the most perfect bulls eye. That year, Dreiss shot the bull out of the middle of the center of the target. However, Ernest Steves of the Steves Lumber fortune stepped up and repeated the feat. In the end, Steves was awarded King Shot and Dreiss the second place Knight Shot.

However, no shooter equaled Emmanuel Seffel. Seffel was the all-time Schuetzen Verein champion and received permanent possession of the state gold medal after outshooting the best in Texas for three consecutive years. His grandson Stephen Seffel,

grew up on Nolan Street in San Antonio and lives in Boerne, Texas. He recalls both his grandfather and Uncle Adolf telling him about the Schuetzen Verein. "It was a regular party," said Seffel. Although anti-German sentiment during WWI put a stop to the competition in 1919 before Seffel's birth, the family continued to practice marksmanship. Seffel still has his grandfather's shooting rifle and several of his medals. At 78, he says he is a "fair" shot himself. He demonstrates, careful not to shoot any of the goats he tends on his ranch, by hitting a four-inch swinging target five times from 200 yards. Back inside his office, he shows pictures of the San Antonio Schuetzen Verein in the park. He remarks that the lamp on his desk belonged to his Aunt Mary. "She paid my Uncle Adolf's admission to a shooting competition. It was expensive, a week's wages." Adolf Altman won the lamp and gave it to Seffel's Aunt Mary "to forgive the debt." It is proof of the straight aim of one early German family.

Pompeo Coppini

An image of Mahncke graces the sloping park that now bears his name. Like the statue of George Brackenridge across Broadway, it was created by Pompeo Coppini, an Italian expatriate who founded the now defunct Academy of Fine Arts on McCullough. Coppini's renowned and somewhat controversial work is the cenotaph sculpture in front of the Alamo. In his book, *From Dawn to Sunset* Coppini details his impression of early 20th century San Antonio. There were "chili queens," women who served or sold chiles in the open-air market or at lunch tables called *baratillos*. There were men of the "western type" and "mostly very young" prostitutes sitting in doorways. He compares San Antonio's red light district downtown to "Dante's Hell" but remains enchanted with the Mexican quarter of town. He writes, "It was the America I had always dreamed."

George Brackenridge and the San Antonio Water Works

According to Marilyn McAdams Sibley's George W. Brackenridge Maverick Philanthropist, this legendary tall bearded San Antonio businessman was a slew of contradictions including; "A Republican in a solidly Democratic state, a financier in a cattleman's country and a Prohibitionist in the goodtime town of San Antonio." In addition, while most of Brackenridge's energy and time was spent making money, he donated great sums of it to causes such as woman's rights, education and the natural beauty of San Antonio.

Was Brackenridge a radical or a pioneer? Probably both. Born in Indiana in 1831, Brackenridge came to Texas with his family in 1853. A Union sympathizer in a family that sided with the Confederates, he traveled to Mexico in 1861 to assist his brother in gathering supplies for the volunteer Texana Guards. On the trip he met Charles Stillman, a successful trader in Brownsville, Texas. The relationship was a pivotal one and Brackenridge soon abandoned any thoughts of joining with the guards to begin trading cotton with Stillman. Years later, Stillman heavily invested in Brackenridge's San Antonio National Bank (forerunner of the First National Bank of San Antonio), the first nationally chartered bank in Texas. With his financial organization as a base,

Brackenridge's business interests ranged wide and his philanthropy even wider. By the time of his death in 1920, his legacy included numerous schools as well as education funds for women and African Americans. He was publisher of a city newspaper and president of the school board. In addition, he reorganized the San Antonio Gas Company and headed the San Antonio Water Works Company. The controversy that surrounded this company's early efforts to bring San Antonio a modern water system foreshadowed the ongoing debate about water issues in South Texas.

Soon after settling in San Antonio, Brackenridge purchased 108 acres along the San Antonio River. This land included the San Antonio Springs more commonly known as the "Head of the River." He called the area Fernridge because Bracken is the Scottish word for fern. For nearly 30 years, the home and estate were the center of his life. But the land beneath Fernridge had long been contentious. Part of the royal grant from the King of Spain to the settlement of San Antonio in 1734, the city put this and many public tracts of land up for sale during hard financial times in 1852. The "Head of the River" was purchased from the city by former San Antonio mayor James R. Sweet before it was eventually sold to Brackenridge

According to Bobbie Whiten Morgan's thesis "George W. Brackenridge and His Control of San Antonio's Water Supply, 1869-1905" local citizens resented this passing of land surrounding a public resource into private hands. Indeed, at the time Brackenridge obtained the deed to the "Head of the River" lands, most city residents were still hauling water to their homes from open irrigation ditches. An 1865 flood and 1866 cholera epidemic further complicated existing public hygiene problems. In 1866, according to San Antonio: A Historical and Pictorial Guide, "the streets at night were dark, the plazas during the rainy weather were quagmires...the garbage was thrown into the back yards. Drinking water was obtained from shallow wells and irrigation ditches, and this water became contaminated from outhouses, and typhoid fever and malaria were prevalent."

A second flood in 1869 made it obvious to all that San Antonio needed a more reliable water system. In 1875, the city brought a representative from the National Waterworks Company of New York city to design a feasible solution. Finally on April 3, 1877 Mayor James French gave Jean Bastiste la Coste a 25-year contract to provide the city's water supply. Brackenridge financially supported la Coste's young company and eventually gained controlling interest and took over the business in 1883. Several efforts were made by the city to purchase what Brackenridge turned into a profitable and successful company but disagreement within city council and with Brackenridge over the price prevented any deal from being made.

By the late 1890s, Brackenridge was experimenting with a new source of water: the drilling of artesian wells. Soon, the waterworks company depended on these wells drilled in the Edwards Aquifer rather than the river for water. In the eyes of the city, Brackenridge's ownership of the property around the springs had outlived its

significance. However, the slowing flow of the river due to the drilling of wells and persistent drought personally troubled Brackenridge. He told a friend, "I have seen this bold, bubbling, laughing river dwindle and fade away. This is my child and it is dying and I cannot stay here to see its last gasps...I must go." Brackenridge spent his later years in an apartment he shared with his sister on the upper floors of the elaborate Moorish stone building (downtown Commerce St. at Navarro) that housed his financial institutions. By 1905, the city still showed no promise of purchasing the company and Brackenridge sold it to George J. Kobusch of Saint Louis. In 1925, the city purchased it from Kobusch for \$7 million dollars.

Brackenridge Villa

Just as Brackenridge lost hope in the river, he also lost interest in his elaborate mansion on the banks. The home was primarily designed for his mother Isabella Brackenridge. After her death in 1887, Brackenridge expressed interest in selling the property. But when first approached by Mother Madeleine Chollet, founder of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, he reportedly said, "Not for one moment will I consider it." Not a fan of organized religion, Brackenridge gave the nun decidedly abrupt treatment and offered to sell the entire 280 acres or nothing. The frugal sisters, not interested in the land surrounding the house or the elaborate furnishings inside knew they could not meet the \$100,000 asking price of the property. Still after prayer and deliberation, they turned the matter over to St. Joseph and even buried medals of his likeness in the land to insure that he would help them make payments. Convent records show that on May 29, 1897, twenty-three years after the original deal, the debt was paid in full. Now an administrative building and guest house on the campus of the University of the Incarnate Word, the Brackenridge Villa was entered on the national Register of Historic Places on July 32, 1978.

Brackenridge Park

The flow of the river and the level of the Edwards Aquifer continue to affect San Antonio and Hill Country residents today. When Brackenridge donated nearly 350 acres of his land for the establishment of Brackenridge Park in 1899, some thought he was providing the people of San Antonio with an eternal water supply. But the land surrounding the springs was only part of the issue. At that time, no one knew how important it was to protect the area where water flows into the recharge zone. Had a greenbelt been set aside in these early years as a recharge zone, San Antonio may not be faced with current development restrictions and water regulation.

Lifelong San Antonio resident and writer Maury Maverick recalls the early days in the park. "There were silent movies on Saturday night. You could get a huge bottle of Hippo Soda for five cents. Before we polluted the river, there was a swimming pool and huge catfish would swim along beneath you." Today, thousands of people pass the swimming hole off of the park's Hildebrand Avenue entrance and do not realize that it was once the focal point for an entire community.

Brackenridge was partially right in his predictions about the dwindling headwaters. Due to increasing withdrawals from the Edwards Aquifer, none of the San Antonio Springs flow today except during periods of extreme rainfall. The river is kept alive by withdrawals of water from wells in Brackenridge Park.

Interestingly, the park was initially designed to be a place where one kind of liquid was forbidden to flow. Jokingly called “Prohibition Park” by some, Brackenridge only made three specifications in his donation to the city. They were; *that it be perpetually free, that no malt liquors be sold, that the city assume upkeep.*

And while the specifics of activity in the park have changed since the early 1900s, it is still a major gathering place. The former polo grounds are now baseball and playing fields. Tree lined paths wind miles through the gardens, parks, museums and waterways. A sight-seeing train, the Brackenridge Eagle, site of the last train robbery in the West, was replaced with three passenger trains in 1988; the Bluebonnet, the Yellow Rose and the Fiesta Flyer. A train ticket gets you around the park once. You can get off and back on at any of three stops; the horse stables, the Witte Museum and the Sunken Gardens. As for the train heist, often called an urban myth, it really happened. In July 1970, two masked men jumped aboard the train waving revolvers and took passengers’ wallets and valuables. The culprits were caught and served time in Leavenworth prison.

Near the pond at the Hildebrand entrance to the park is the Arbor Bridge. This bridge is one example of the cement artwork of Dionicio Rodriguez. Crafted to look like a log bridge, the piece dates to about 1929. In 1915, parks and sanitation commissioner Ray Lambert, namesake of Fort Lambert Beach in the park, commissioned Rodriguez to design and build the bridge and other benches. There are other examples of Rodriguez’s work throughout the park and the Alamo Heights neighborhood. Lambert also hired the Japanese artist, Jingu, to design the Sunken Gardens. These gardens were built into the rock quarry that supplied limestone for many San Antonio structures and for the state capitol in Austin. Jingu designed a Japanese tea garden in the quarry. He lived in San Antonio and operated the tearoom until 1938. Fortunately, he did not live to witness the harsh WWII reaction to people of Japanese descent. During the war, Jingu’s family was forced to return to Japan and the name of the tea garden was changed to the Chinese Tea Garden. In 1985, the name was reinstated as Japanese. The Jingu family returned to celebrate the occasion.

One of the biggest unofficial celebrations in Brackenridge Park is the Easter weekend campout. The event has attracted as many as 30,000 people, primarily Mexican American families, who spend Saturday and sometimes even Friday night before Easter in the park to save a good picnic site for Sunday. By Easter morning, brightly colored eggs are hidden around the park, pits are stoked and smoking and the laughter of families fill the air. All are welcome, if you can find a spot.

Gutzon Borglum's Studio

Built in 1889, a small limestone building served as the lower pump house for the city waterworks. The building was later used to house a range of artists and artists-to-be. The first was John Gutzon De La Mothe Borglum. Known as Gutzon Borglum, the painter and sculptor was born to Danish parents in 1867. He came to San Antonio in 1924 to make the model for the Old Trail Driver's statue in front of Pioneer Trail Drivers Texas Rangers Museum (located at 3805 Broadway). Borglum lived in the Menger Hotel during the 1920s and purchased the old pump house for a studio. While living in San Antonio, he completed the model for his most famous work, Mt. Rushmore. In 1937, the artist moved to California. Before leaving, he presented the key to the studio to Ellen Quillin, director of the Witte Memorial Museum. Beginning in 1939, the studio was used as the Museum's School of Art.

Witte Museum

The world is a great book of which they that never stir from home read only a page.

-Ellen Schulz Quillin, founder of the Witte Museum

Where else but San Antonio can one tour include water usage issues, German marksmen, toilet seat art, the site of Mt. Rushmore's design, deep-fried snakes and Geronimo? Perhaps the triad of natural history, art and history found in the Witte Museum's provides the best insight on the diverse riches of this neighborhood.

The museum officially began in 1926 under the charter of the San Antonio Museum Association by Ellen Schulz, a local schoolteacher. The Witte Memorial Museum building was constructed with public funds and a \$65,000 bequest to the city from local business man Alfred G. Witte who stipulated that a museum be built in Brackenridge Park in memory of his parents. The facility was known as the Witte Memorial Museum until 1984 when the name was simplified to the Witte Museum. From 1969 to 1987, the Museum Association operated a second collection named the Witte Confluence Collection (later called the San Antonio Museum of Transportation) to exhibit its horse-drawn carriage and antique car collection. In 1970, the Witte shifted its emphasis shifted to art.

Eventually the Museum Association purchased and renovated an abandoned nineteenth-century brewery to house a third museum, the San Antonio Museum of Art. When the Museum of Art opened in 1981, the Witte refocused to its original purpose: to exhibit natural history, anthropology, and Texas and regional history.

The museum now features several large permanent collections highlighting the ethnography, decorative arts and textiles, science and natural sciences of Texas and the

Southwest. In addition, the Witte houses traveling exhibitions, weekend events, live gallery theatre and concerts. Designed as a “move at your own pace” museum with all exhibits described in both Spanish and English, a visit to the Witte can take an hour, all day or several days. The H-E-B Science Treehouse overlooking the river is a 15,000 square foot building constructed of native Texas limestone. It features four levels of hands-on science exhibits for kids of all ages (including adult kids). Visitors can launch a tennis ball two stories high, play music with laser beams and hoist themselves up with pulleys. Behind the H-E-B house is the “little” treehouse, created by artist Carlos Cortes. Cortes learned the technique for making cement look like wood from his great uncle Dionicio Rodriguez, the artist who made the famous “wooden” cement bridge in Brackenridge Park. Whether you are interested in the fancy Fiesta formal gowns, the Rock Art of the Lower Pecos or the endangered prairie chicken, it can be found in the Witte. As the museum personnel are fond of saying, “You haven’t really been to Texas until you’ve been to the Witte.”

Conclusion

For many people, San Antonio is known as a military town. With numerous military bases located in all parts of the city, it is a title well earned. It is also a military town in the more historical sense that its very structure was shaped by the post-Civil War years. Streets widened. Cemeteries bulged. Water flowed. And while many people travel to San Antonio for military reasons, for a taste of Mexican culture or simply to wander the Riverwalk, these well known attractions tell only part of the story. As with the mission of the near Northside Witte Museum, these San Antonio’s neighborhoods provide an intriguing mix of science, culture and history. In one afternoon, one can picnic in Brackenridge or the Fort Sam Quadrangle, climb the Witte Treehouse, see an art exhibit, tour an architecturally grand home and wind up at a unique bed and breakfast that once housed a decorated general. These features, coupled with all that the greater city offers, affirm “you haven’t really been to Texas until you’ve been to San Antonio.”

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